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A

NARRATIVE

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"GRISWOLD,"

The African Youth,

FROM THE MISSION SCHOOL, AT CAPE PALMAS,

WHO

DIED IN BOSTON, MAY 16, 1844.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY A FRIEND OF MISSIONS.
1845.

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Miss Mary Adams Beecher
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OF THE

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NARRATIVE.

THE YOUNG AFRICAN, whose arrival in this city in company with the Rev. Dr. Savage, was noticed in the Witness and Advocate of the 20th October, 1843, is now numbered with the dead. His father is king of the Barbo tribe, and he and his people are still living in the lowest depths of heathenism.

"Wana Hobah" (his native name) was taken into the Mission school of the American Protestant Episcopal Church, at Cape Palmas in 1836, being then about ten years of age, and but little elevated in intellectual condition above the beasts of the forest.

He was the fifth of the fifteen native youths

who, for several years past, have been supported at the mission stations in Africa by the scholars and teachers of Grace Church Sunday school in this city, and by their request he was named A. V. Griswold.

His improvement at the Mission school was very satisfactory, particularly in view of the fact, that a foreign language was to be acquired before he could advance a step in other studies. We found him, after only a few years' instruction by our missionaries in Africa, well versed in the scriptures, and the doctrines and services of our Church, in grammar, geography, arithmetic, and writing, and no stranger to the study of philosophy and astronomy.

The following extract from the notice referred to, will show the impression produced on those who saw him soon after his arrival in Boston, in October, 1843:

"He reads fluently and without embarrassment, and whoever had the privilege and pleasure of witnessing his interesting examination, which

took place in Grace Church Sunday school, on Sunday morning, could not but thank God for such an evidence of the blessed nature of the missionary work, and of the faithfulness of our missionaries in Africa. Especially must they have been gratified with his ready and appropriate answers to the questions put to him by the Rev. Mr. C., in reference to the leading doctrines of the Christian religion."

The object which Dr. Savage had in view in bringing him to America was, that he might learn the art of printing, then return to his native land and take his station at the missionary press.

During his residence in this city, he was in the family of Mr. and Mrs. Perkins, who had Griswold under their care when in Africa, two or three years since; and was also a regular attendant at the Sunday school of Grace Church. He was kindly taken into the printing-office of T. R. Marvin, Esq., and every person connected with the establishment, manifested a deep and lively interest in his welfare. The following

extract of a letter written by Griswold to his father, dated October 31st, is interesting evidence of the state of his mind, after his first month's residence in this city:

"I have very good friends here. I am living with Mr. Perkins. I am now learning to print, so as to come home and print books for our countrymen. I have seen the mighty works of the Lord. I have seen water hard as stone, and burns like fire. Witch never touch me. I am well. The Lord is with me, so you and all the old men ought to throw away your gregrees and serve God, because He only is able to save your souls from eternal punishment of hell.

"The leaves of the trees are falling off now, and as these leaves are falling, so we all shall fall. O what a greater punishment it must be to them that hear the word of God and do not do it; if we do not love God for all the things He has done for us, and above all, for sending His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us."

After his death, the following was found

among his few books and papers, being the hasty draft of a letter written by him during the visit of Dr. Savage here in April, 1844, and addressed to a young friend in the Mission school at Cape Palmas:

"Dear Friend: I am very glad to hear that you are all well. So we all are here. But how is my poor old father and mother and all my friends?

"I would advise you, my dear young friends of the Mission schools, to keep up as great a strife and earnestness in religion, as if you knew yourselves to be in a state of nature, and were seeking conversion.

"Persons are advised, under conviction, to be earnest and violent for the kingdom of heaven, but when they have attained to conversion, they ought not to be the less watchful, laborious and earnest in the whole work of religion, but the more so, for they are under infinite greater obligations.

"For want of this, many persons, in few months

after their conversion, have begun to lose their sweet and lively sense of spiritual things, and to grow dark, and have 'pierced themselves through with many sorrows.' Whereas, if you do as the apostle did, your path shall be 'as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'"

A manuscript was also found among his papers, which gave good evidence of his familiar acquaintance with, and regard for, the Book of Common Prayer. Several pages were written in the Barbo language, comprising the opening sentences, Exhortation, Lord's Prayer, &c.

Being intelligent and quick to learn, his improvement was rapid, and he bid fair soon to accomplish the object for which he came to this country. But the wise and overruling providence of God has ordered otherwise. After having passed through one of our severest winters with almost entire exemption from disease, during which he was seldom absent from his accustomed employment, and when all danger from the

severity of our climate seemed to be over, he was attacked, on Sunday, May 5th, 1844, with inflammation of the lungs. Although the disease was developed with considerable severity, still his case was not considered hopeless until within a few hours of his death, which happened on the twelfth day. About noon, on Thursday, the 16th, a change took place for the worse, and notwithstanding the most energetic treatment, he continued to sink until a little before midnight, when he quietly breathed his last. The writer of this cannot but bear testimony to the untiring efforts of Dr. H. to alleviate the sufferings of the deceased, and to the unceasing and patient labors of Mr. and Mrs. Perkins, who watched over him by day and by night.

In reviewing Griswold's course of life during his seven or eight months' residence among us, it is pleasant to be able to state that his Bible was his most constant companion. Always on returning from his daily avocation at evening, he was in the habit of seating himself at the table

with his Bible and dictionary before him. He would read carefully; look out the definition of difficult words; and when not able to understand in this way, make inquiry of others. He was regular in his private devotions, and frequently when Mr. Perkins had occasion to go into his chamber, he has found him on his knees, praying to his Father in secret.

His acquaintance with the Old and New Testaments was often brought out in the Sunday school. When questions of a general nature were asked, and there was any hesitation or delay in answering, an appeal to Griswold was seldom made in vain. His prompt and pertinent manner of replying will not soon be forgotten. During his sickness, and when the trying hour of death drew near, he seemed to find great comfort and consolation in prayer, and in the promises of God's word which he had so constantly and diligently studied.

On the third day of his sickness, he said to Mr. Perkins, "I shall die." On being asked whether

he was willing to die, he replied, "Yes, if it is God's will." Mr. Perkins inquired what made him willing to die, and whether he had not been a great sinner. His answer was, "I hope God has wiped all my sins out of His book for Jesus' sake." He was asked what he had done to cause God thus to favor him. He said, "I have prayed to Him to forgive me, and Jesus has died for me." Inquiry was then made, if it were left to him to recover or die, what he would do. To which he replied, "Just as God wishes." At another time he said, "I do not ask to live; I do not ask to die. If God is willing I should go back to Africa and print the Bible for my country-people, I should like to go. If not, I am willing to die." Mr. Perkins said to him: perhaps God may see that if He permits you to go back to Africa, you may bring dishonor on His name by returning to heathenism. He raised his eyes towards heaven, and said, with striking emphasis, "God forbid." Inquiry was made, whether he wished to say any thing to Dr. Savage. He

answered, "Ask Dr. Savage to forgive me all the bad things I have done, and to pray for me. Ask him to ask the boys to pray for me, that I may go back to Africa as a printer, and print the Bible." He was told if he was sick in his own country, his old father would say he was witched, and if he should now die, he will say witch has killed him. He was then asked what message he would send to his father about it. He said, "Tell my father, witch is all foolishness; God gave me to you and God has taken me away from you. You must bless the Lord for this." When asked if he would like to have prayers offered for him in Church, he answered quickly, "Yes," and after a short pause, he added, "Yes, yes, very much indeed."

The night before he died, Griswold's Sunday school teacher watched with him. The most of the time he was restless and uneasy; but occasionally he was composed, and then was engaged either in trying to sing some favorite hymns or in prayer. At one time in particular,

about midnight, he commenced an audible prayer, in which he asked God's blessing on his poor father and mother, the missionaries, and the Sunday school, and on his own soul. He frequently, during his sickness, attempted to sing some of the Sunday school hymns, and on the day of his death, he commenced singing the hymn,

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,"

which he had learned from the S. S. Harp, but being unable, from shortness of breath, to accomplish it, Mr. Perkins assisted him, and thus together they sung several verses, Griswold joining in as well as he could. A few hours before his death, Mr. Perkins asked him what he would wish to say to his father. He replied, "Bless the Lord, O my father; honor and worship him forever. Cast away all your idols, and worship him alone." After this, he seemed to gather up all his remaining strength, and

prayed aloud and distinctly for his parents, all his friends in Africa, teachers and scholars of the mission schools, that God would have mercy on them; he alluded to the justice of God in condemning the wicked, and expressed his thankfulness that God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son that he might "save them from the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched." He then repeated with great solemnity and unusual distinctness — and it was the last sentence he uttered — "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen."

This was about ten o'clock at night, and, for an hour after, he occasionally attempted to sing a hymn, but was only able to make out a few notes. During the remaining hour of his life, he was in a dying state, but apparently free from conscious suffering; and just before twelve he quietly slept the sleep of death, and who can doubt that angels stood ready to transport the

soul of our departed brother to the realms of bliss and glory. When we consider how many there are, who, amid the full blaze of gospel light, neglect the care of their souls and a proper preparation for eternity, we cannot but be reminded, by the foregoing narrative, of these words of our Saviour: "I say unto you that many shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness." "Unto whom much is given, of them shall much be required."

The following hymn, which was a great favorite with Griswold, was, as already noticed, sung by him on his dying bed:

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.

Thou dying Lamb! thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Are saved, to sin no more.

Since first, by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be, till I die.

And when this feeble, stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave—
Then, in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing thy power to save.

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